

# The Farmers' Chronicles

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## International Day of Plant Health 2026: Protecting Plants Must Become A Daily Responsibility

We are fortunate to have each meal we take from a healthy plant. The bread we buy, the fruits packed into school lunch boxes, the fresh produce available at your local market and the grazing lands that feed animals all rely on healthy crops and thriving ecological systems. But how often do you consider your plant health until a disease epidemic ruin a harvest season, pests start spreading throughout farming districts, and food costs rise unexpectedly?

That is why the International Day of Plant Health (IDPH) is such an important international celebration. As we celebrate IDPH on 12 May annually, this year's theme, "Plant Biosecurity for Food Security", emphasised a very simple

yet very urgent reality: protecting plants protects people, their livelihoods, their economies, and their food supply for tomorrow. However, protecting plants through the International Day of Plant Health should only represent a beginning and not an ending. It should be an ongoing process of developing a new culture of plant health within our farming practices, our policies, and our individual decision-making processes as communities and as consumers.

Plants provide much more than what appear on our store shelves. Plants underpin the backbone of global food systems, support millions of jobs, maintain rural economies, and



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ensure ecological stability. Healthy crops equate to stable food supplies, robust economies, and improved nutrition in communities. Sadly, the threat to plant health does not stop at the farm gate. Each year, the loss of significant quantities of food crops due to pests and diseases occurs worldwide. Farmers experience losses in income as yields diminish. Production of food declines. Prices increase. Already disadvantaged families face increased hardship due to fewer options being placed upon them to obtain adequate nourishment.

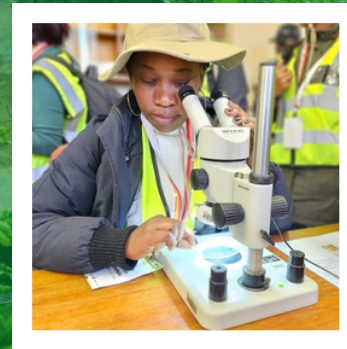
Moreover, in many developing countries where agriculture is still a major contributor to both livelihoods and economic growth, the impacts can be catastrophic. Climate change is making this problem even more difficult. Rising temperatures combined with increasing frequency of extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, will continue to create ideal conditions for pests and diseases to spread more quickly across borders and through agricultural systems. For this reason, protecting plant biosecurity has never been more imperative.

Plant biosecurity relates to the methods employed to prevent harmful pests, diseases and invasive species from entering new areas, spreading within those areas or establishing themselves in new places. Essentially, strong biosecurity systems focus on prevention through early detection, monitoring and prompt responses prior to pest and disease outbreaks escalating into national emergencies. Biosecurity systems

protect crops and preserve biodiversity, strengthen agricultural trade, and support long-term food security. However, plant biosecurity is not solely the responsibility of laboratories, border authorities/agencies and agricultural researchers. The protection of plant life is dependent upon widespread involvement by all members of society. Farmers are responsible for monitoring their crops for any signs of pests or diseases.

Farming communities can assist in reducing risks associated with pest and diseases when they restrict movement of diseased plants materials across regional boundaries. Consumers contribute when they purchase products produced by sustainable agricultural methods and are cognisant of the essentiality of producing high-quality food supplies. Early reporting of unusual crop damage, use of certified seedstock, maintenance of good field hygiene and promotion for local agricultural education programmes are just some examples of ways in which everyday activities can contribute to developing stronger systems for protecting plants.

Although these are relatively minor acts individually, they collectively contribute to efforts aimed at securing food production sustainability. Protecting plant health is a constant responsibility requiring continued awareness, cooperation and a collective action. While the conclusion of May will mark the conclusion of discussions surrounding International Day of



Plant Health, with a likely result in decreased visibility for awareness campaigns, the problems associated with pests and diseases will not cease once May ends. Pests will continue spreading after awareness campaigns conclude. Farmers will continue to deal with challenging production circumstances. Researchers will continue to search for solutions to emerging agricultural issues. And most importantly, communities will need safe, reliable food systems every single day.

Therefore, while International Day of Plant Health should be seen as a call to action to initiate awareness and action toward protecting plant health, it should not be limited to a once-per-year conversation. It should rather function as the catalyst for long-term awareness and action toward achieving the goal of protecting plant life.

To achieve the goal of protecting plants there needs to be a year-long commitment to doing so. There is a need for governments to develop enhanced surveillance mechanisms and invest in agricultural research. There is a need for stronger relationships between scientists, farmers, businesses and community groups. Most importantly, there is a need for ordinary citizens to recognise that plant health directly impacts the quality of the food they consume and the quality of life they strive to build in the future. Food security depends on having an adequate supply of food. It also requires protection for crops and ecosystems that allow food production in the first place.

Healthy crops produce nutritious foods, provide jobs, and enhance both trade and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, healthy crops enable developing countries to construct more sustainable agricultural systems that can withstand many different types of future threats. If we do nothing to protect healthy crops today, then bigger issues will arise regarding crop health tomorrow.

International Day of Plant Health 2026 alerted the entire world that biosecurity is a collective duty and not just a scientific issue debated by scientists in laboratories or researchers at their desks, it affects every family, every farmer, every consumer, and all nations. While the world faces increasing climate pressure, food shortages and agricultural issues, the demand to act is growing louder and increasingly urgent. Plant health should be included as one of our daily considerations. Protecting plants, protects food, livelihoods and the future of food security.

